

Fourth International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Emotional Geographies 1-3 July at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands

Session Title: Disorientation as spatial experience: the feeling “of utter disaster” and the “delicious flavor” of getting lost

Organiser: Marcella Schmidt di Friedberg (University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy)

Key words: disorientation, getting lost, labyrinth, metaphors, fear

Call for Abstracts

In this interdisciplinary session, we seek to engage different scholars in a discussion on orientation/disorientation. The *sens* (Merleau-Ponty) of space is the basis of all social experience. From the end of XIX Century, researchers have attempted to understand whether in humans and non-humans an orientation sense exists, how it works, if it has a gendered dimension. In the artistic and literary exploration of geography, disorientation and labyrinths, with their hidden significance, are powerful metaphors for the understanding of the contemporary world: “Dance, dance, otherwise we are lost”, declares the German choreographer Pina Bausch. Disorientation could invest a multiplicity of spaces. The virtual world can be explained and visited through the same metaphor, translating it into the language of place and space. In a technological world, supported by technological prosthesis (GPS, GIS), the “sense of direction will become a given” (Thrift) and the rhizomatic labyrinth can be used to imagine the concept of net and of World Wide Web (Deleuze, Guattari). Orientation is based on a rational visualization of space, on a precise definition of goals, on time schedules, on exact directions and boundaries. The emotional experience of getting lost can mean fear: “The very word 'lost' in our language means much more than simple geographical uncertainty; it carries overtones of utter disaster” (Lynch). The disposition to get lost could be interpreted, in the other hand, from a “nomadologic” point of view (Braidotti), as a different and freer relation with our body. Performing places through disorientation could produce a more imaginative perception of where we are and the consciousness that “maps are always lying and true places are never there” (Hermann Melville).

We invite papers exploring the different dimensions of disorientation. Those contributions include, but are not limited to:

- orientation/disorientation
- disorientation as metaphor
- fear of getting lost
- agoraphobia and claustrophobia
- getting lost and performing arts (dance, music, painting)
- lost in cyberspace
- lost in the wood
- lost in the city
- lost in maps
- labyrinths
- disorientation and illness

Please send abstracts of approx. 300 words to Marcella by January 5th, 2013:

marcella.schmidt@unimib.it

Marcella Schmidt di Friedberg is Associate Professor of Geography, in the Department of Human Sciences for Education “Riccardo Massa” of the University of Milano-Bicocca (Italy). Her research interests concerns Cultural Geography, Gender Geography and History of the Geographical Thought: she has been working especially on the relations between nature, culture, memory and landscape in different contexts, from the Mediterranean, to Japan. She is member of the Editorial Board of ACME and of the IGU commission on Gender and Geography. Her publications include *L’arca di Noè. Conservazionismo tra natura e cultura* (2004), *Elisée Reclus. Natura e educazione* (2007), *Cos’è il mondo? E’ un globo di cartone* (2010) *Lo spazio della differenza* (with Rachele Borghi). Recently, she is working on the project: *I’m not here: Geographies of Disorientation*, examining the dynamics of orientation/disorientation across a broad diversity of contexts (forest, city, labyrinth, virtual environments, illness).